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Former C.I.A. Agent Linked to Assassin's Weapon

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ALEXANDRIA, Va., July 26 — The Justice Department asserted today that Edwin P. Wilson, a former American intelligence agent accused of illegally aiding Libyan terrorists, played a key role in supplying the weapon that was used to assassinate a Libyan dissident in West Germany in 1980.

A former Wilson associate, Wallace L. Klink, pleaded guilty today in Federal District Court here to firearms violations for his role in obtaining in the United States a pistol the Government said was used to murder a former Libyan diplomat in Bonn.

Mr. Wilson was not formally charged with any crime in today's proceeding. But Theodore S. Greenberg, an assistant United States Attorney, later said that Mr. Wilson's involvement in supplying the gun was the subject of a continuing investigation.

It was the first time in the six-year investigation of Mr. Wilson's activities that the Government had formally linked him to an actual assassination.

A lawyer for Mr. Wilson, Herald Price Fahringer of New York, denied that his client had had a role in supplying the gun used to kill the Libyan. In a telephone interview, Mr. Fahringer said, "We would expect, if we ever had to meet that accusation, that we could successfully disprove it."

Tied to Plan to Kill Exile

Mr. Wilson was charged in 1980 with conspiracy to kill a Libyan in exile in Egypt. But, according to Justice Department officials, that plan was aborted when the men supposedly hired by Mr. Wilson to do the killing reported the effort to the Central Intelligence Agency.

In addition, a former Green Beret soldier whom prosecutors said they believed had been hired by Mr. Wilson was convicted last year of misdemeanor assault charges in the 1980 shooting of a Libyan student in Fort Collins, Colo. The student survived, and Mr. Wilson was not charged.

Mr. Wilson, a former covert agent for the agency, was indicted in 1980 on charges of illegally shipping explosives to Libya as part of a project to train terrorists.

In 1978, according to the Justice Department, he and another former agent, Frank E. Terpil, made a deal with Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, the Libyan leader, to sell their expertise in intelligence and military matters to Libya.

Mr. Wilson was apprehended last month in New York and is in custody awaiting trial. Mr. Terpil is a fugitive, reportedly living in Beirut, Lebanon.

Mr. Wilson's role in the West German assassination was said by the Justice Department to have begun in March 1979, when he telephoned Mr. Klink from overseas and instructed him to purchase four pistols. At the time, Mr. Klink was employed by Mr. Wilson as a farmhand at his Upperville, Va., estate.

Mr. Klink, a former member of the Army Special Forces, or Green Berets, worked for Mr. Wilson in Libya before moving to the Virginia farm, the Government said. He was one of more than a dozen former Green Berets whom Mr. Wilson recruited in 1977 to be instructors at the Libyan terrorist training project, according to Federal prosecutors.

Weapons Shipped to Europe

After the telephone conversation with Mr. Wilson, the Government said, Mr. Klink obtained \$1,500 of Mr. Wilson's money from another Wilson associate and traveled to Fayetteville, N. C., the site of Fort Bragg and Special Forces headquarters.

With the help of a friend, Mr. Klink bought the four weapons ordered by Mr. Wilson, telling his friend, according to the Government, that they were needed for a Central Intelligence Agency operation outside the United States. One of the guns was a Smith & Wesson pistol.

After Mr. Klink returned to Virginia, according to the Justice Department,

Mr. Wilson told him to turn the weapons over to another Wilson associate, who packed them in a tool box. Sometime in late March or April, that associate, who was not identified by the Government, flew with the box to Rotterdam via London. From there, the associate drove to Bonn.

The Government reported that the pistols were delivered in Bonn to a Libyan outside the Libyan Embassy. The recipient was not identified.

More than a year later, on May 10, 1980, the gun was used by Bashir Ehmida to kill Omran el-Mehdawi, the former finance attaché and second secretary in the Libyan Embassy in Bonn, the Justice Department charged. Justice Department officials said that Mr. Ehmida was in custody in West Germany.

The victim, reportedly a critic of Colonel Qaddafi, had refused to return to Libya in 1978 when his assignment in Bonn ended, American officials said. In 1979 and 1980, at least eight Libyan expatriates were killed in Europe as part of what American officials said was an effort by Colonel Qaddafi to eliminate opposition to his Government.

Mr. Klink, in today's proceeding, pleaded guilty to the illegal interstate transport of firearms. He denied having told his friend in Fayetteville, N. C., that the weapons were intended for an agency operation, and he said he had not known that the guns were to be used for an assassination.

Mr. Klink, if convicted, would face a possible prison term of five years and a \$5,000 fine for his role in the weapons violations.